DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 235 546 EA 015 939

TITLE	Actions for State Boards of Education.
INSTITUTION	Education Commission of the States, Denver, CO. Task Force on Education for Economic Growth.
PUB DATE	[83]
NOTE	6p.; For related documents, see EA 015 936-943 and EA 016 153 (the report).
AVAILABLE FROM	The Distribution Center, Education Commission of the States, 1860 Lincoln, #300, Denver, CO 80295 (6 copies, $5.00).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Guides; Advisory Committees; *Change Strategies; Cooperative Planning; *Educational Improvement; Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; Guidelines; Pamphlets; *Public Education; *State Boards of Education
IDENTIFIERS	PF Project

ABSTRACT

Actions which state boards of education can take to promote the improvement of K-12 public education are presented in this brochure. The brochure is one of a series which offers specific ways in which different interest groups can respond to the eight broad action recommendations proposed by the Education Commission of the States' Task Force on Education for Economic Growth in their report, "Action for Excellence." The following areas are covered by the recommendations: (1) educational improvement plans; (2) partnerships between states and communities; (3) educational resources; (4) teacher improvement and recognition; (5) the student's academic experiences; (6) educational quality assurance; (7) educational leadership and management; and (8) services to students who are unserved or underserved. (DC)

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ACTIONS
FOR
STATE BOARDS OF EDUCATION

Task Force on Education for Economic Growth

Education Commission of the States

EA015939

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

The challenge facing leaders in every state of the union is to inspire a new generation of citizens to be even more productive and imaginative than the generations who made "American know-how" a standard of excellence around the world. Beyond inspiring them, leaders must ***empower*** them by providing an education system that fosters the necessary skills, imagination and commitment.

Unfortunately, report after report indicates that we have for too long ignored the obvious connection between a well educated work force and a productive, expanding economy. In addition, technological changes over the last two decades are outpacing the schools' capacity to address change. Skills we asked the schools to stress a few short years ago seem inadequate today. And as the demand for highly trained people has risen, the achievement of students — especially in high-demand skills such as analysis or problem-solving — has been declining.

Americans have every right to be proud of an education system like no other in its commitment to serve ***all*** citizens, not just a privileged few. Today many exemplary schools, colleges and universities are graduating students who are as well prepared as any in the world to face the challenges of the future. But our schools must be strengthened, if they are to do what they alone can do: bring about an American renaissance.

We are challenged to act now, each in our own way, to:

- **Establish** clear, compelling and widely agreed upon goals and priorities for improving education
- **Upgrade** our expectations for children and the skills required to meet those expectations
- **Collaborate** as never before — educators, governors, legislators, business and labor leaders and citizens — to strengthen the schools
- **Educate *all*** students in the skills essential to economic productivity and to the high quality of life a strong, growing economy can provide.

WHAT IS THE RESPONSE?

In December 1982, the Education Commission of the States established a national Task Force on Education for Economic Growth under the leadership of Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. Forty-one distinguished national leaders set these goals for the Task Force:

- Create national understanding of the need for a well educated work force and of the changing skills essential to economic growth
- Promote policies, programs and actions that national, state and local leaders can use to improve education
- Establish partnerships among leaders in communities, business, labor, government and education to improve education in ways that lead to economic growth and a higher quality of life for all Americans.

The Task Force has published ***Action for Excellence,*** a report on the condition of education today and a series of recommendations for leaders throughout the country. The Task Force's eight major recommendations appear below. Following each are some steps leaders can take to reaffirm a national commitment to our children and our economy.

WHAT ACTIONS CAN STATE BOARDS TAKE?

The Task Force makes its recommendations at a time when state boards of education across the nation, deeply committed to the same goals, are already acting to improve education. Many of the actions described here are ones that state boards are already taking; others may be new to some boards. All the actions present state boards with an unprecedented opportunity to continue mobilizing strong new sources of support for education. By continuing to strengthen current policies, adopt innovative policies, channel support to high priorities and make the most of productive partnerships, state boards play a pivotal role in policy leadership.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 1

Develop — and put into effect as promptly as possible — plans for improving education in the public schools from kindergarten through grade 12.

- Help formulate a state plan for education.
- Participate actively on a state Task Force on Education for Economic Growth.
- Assemble information for the task force on, for example, state policies, local developments, how the state board operates and barriers to action.
- Draw on the specialized knowledge many state board members have of both business and education.
- Provide the task force with information on policies of other states that national organizations like NASBE can provide.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 2

Create broader and more effective partnerships for improving education in the states and communities of the nation.

- Building on the work of the national task force, continue to define the skills needed in the workplace, then examine the state policy implications of equipping students with those skills (e.g., the implications for graduation requirements).
- Establish model policies for partnerships between education and legislatures, governors, state agencies and businesses.
- Continue discussions about regional partnerships in areas like reciprocal teacher certification.
- Study the policy implications of involving business in curriculum planning and in other aspects of education, looking at costs as well as benefits.
- Continue to be aware of community concerns and, in turn, make communities aware of the role state boards play and the resources they have to offer.
- Continue to broaden the involvement in education of parents and community members.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 3

Marshal the resources which are essential for improving the public schools.

- Consider questions of resource allocation at the same time as policy decisions are made about state priorities in education.
- Seek new sources of funds for education.
- Gather information about collaborative efforts in business and education, seeking specific answers to questions of who, what, when, where — and how much.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 4

Express a new and higher regard for teachers and for the profession of teaching.

- Continue to gather information on local developments from principals, local boards, teachers and citizens — and disseminate information about reforms the state board is considering.
- Call special meetings of the board or hold public hearings to gather information that can be used to assess the long-range implications of policies that affect the teaching profession.
- Identify state needs, particularly for preservice and inservice training.
- Continue to provide a factual basis for policy discussions by collecting state data on certification standards, number of teachers and so forth.
- Analyze current or proposed policies of other states for usable information.
- Establish state commissions to deal with specific aspects of teacher education.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 5

Make the academic experience more intense and more productive.

- Examine the effects of policies on teacher certification, curriculum content, length of school day/year, graduation requirements and minimum competency testing — including the effects (intended or unintended) of their relationship with one another and with student achievement.
- Augment the state board's capacity to obtain information about local and national conditions.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 6

Provide quality assurance in education.

- Set state goals for quality in education and recommend policies and programs to reach those goals.
- Collaborate with schools of education, master teachers and other practitioners, as well as with "experts," to assess the quality of programs, competency testing and accreditation.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 7

Improve leadership and management in the schools.

- Analyze the literature on effective principals and effective schools to identify policy implications in areas such as principal certification, tenure, pre-service training, in-service training and the role of the principal as instructional leader.
- Examine the policies of other states relating to the roles of principals and other school leaders and their effectiveness in upgrading the management of schools.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 8

Serve better those students who are now unserved or underserved.

- Set state priorities for meeting the special needs of unserved or underserved students.
- Continue to gather and disseminate specific information on teacher education, teacher certification, education and technology, special education, legal issues, students with limited proficiency in English, rural and urban centers and other issues that affect a state's capability to serve target groups.
- Continue to establish programs for talented and academically gifted students in all target groups.
- Support the broad and equitable distribution of educational resources so that no child is denied the possibility of becoming a productive member of society.

Although the Task Force recommendations are generally consistent with NASBE policy, NASBE has not formally endorsed them.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

The Task Force will continue to be active, promoting efforts to improve K-12 education and developing products that governors and other concerned groups can use to improve education for economic growth. For more information, contact:

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